







#01 [WELCOME TO DESPAIR HIGH SCHOOL]
OO1

#02 [(AB)NORMAL ARC: KILL AND LIVE TO SURVIVE (DAILY LIFE)] OS3

#03 [ABNORMAL ARC: KILL AND LIVE TO SURVIVE (DEADLY LIFE) I] —103

#04 [ABNORMAL ARC: KILL AND LIVE TO SURVIVE (DEADLY LIFE) II] 145































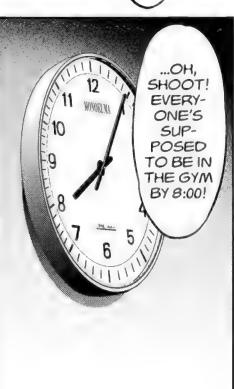


...WHO
WOULD WRITE
SOMETHING
LIKE THIS...IS IT
SOME KIND OF
JOKE...?

















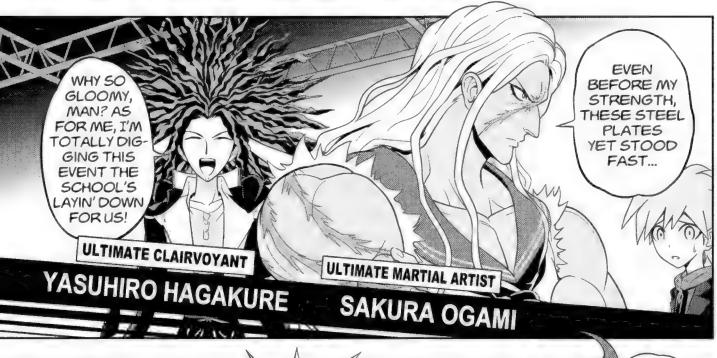














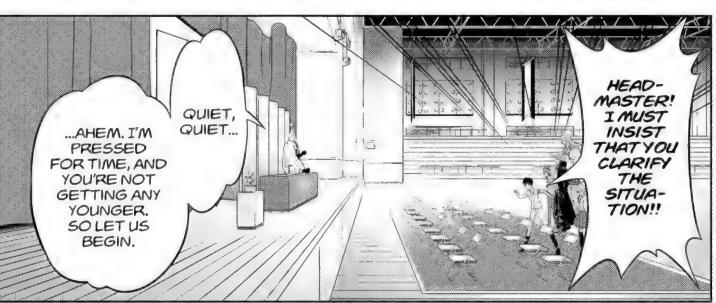


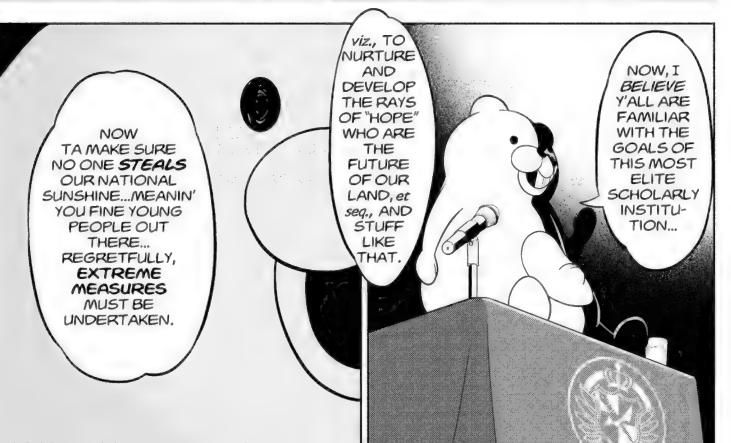
























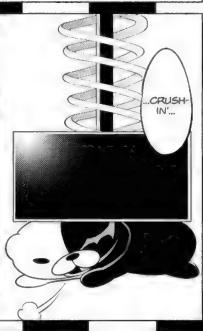




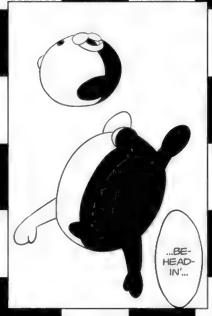


























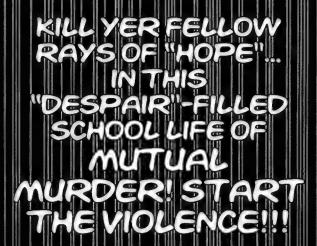














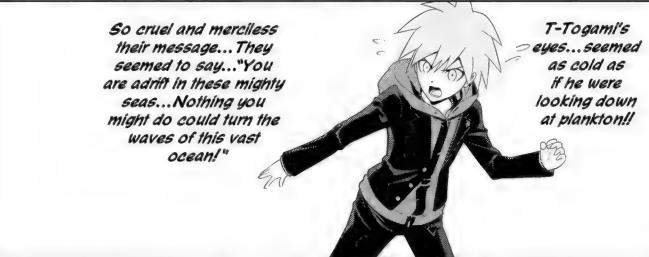
FEEL FREE TO STOP YER HEARTS TO YER HEARTS' CONTENT!! I'M DYIN' FOR SOME DEATH!! I'M SLOBBERIN' FOR SOME SLAYIN'!!!



















































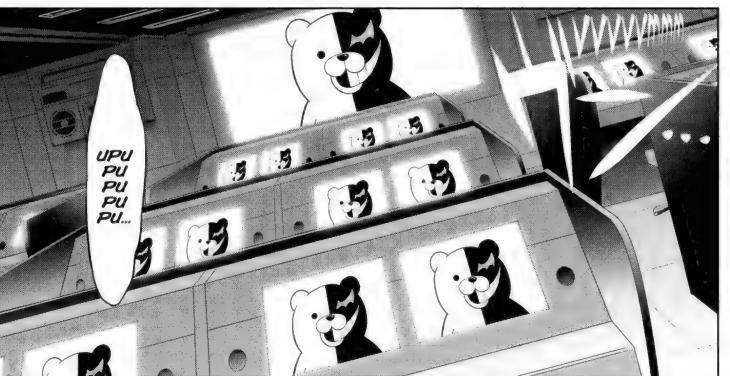




















DEGOMO!















































...they tried to kill Maizono ...?!





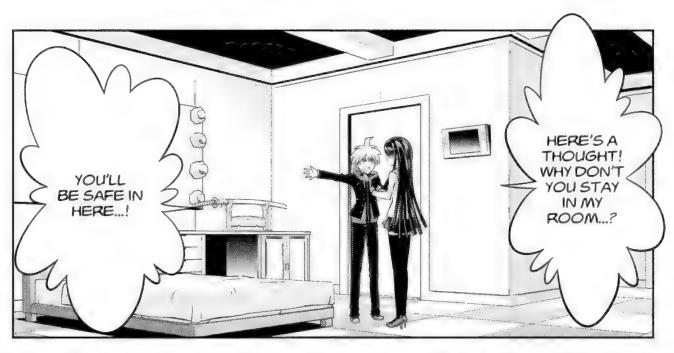
...I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE...!









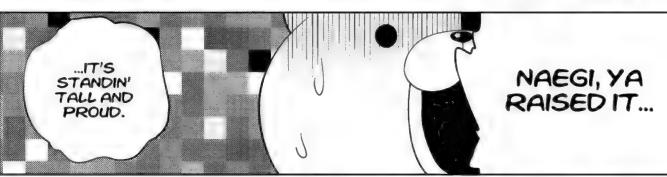
















On the pole...?

Why, the romance flag, of course. Way up on the pole.

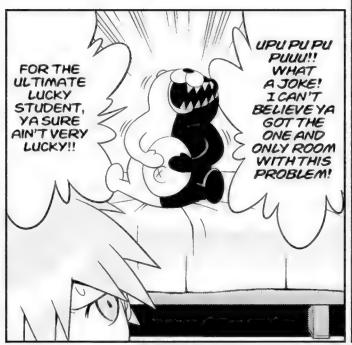


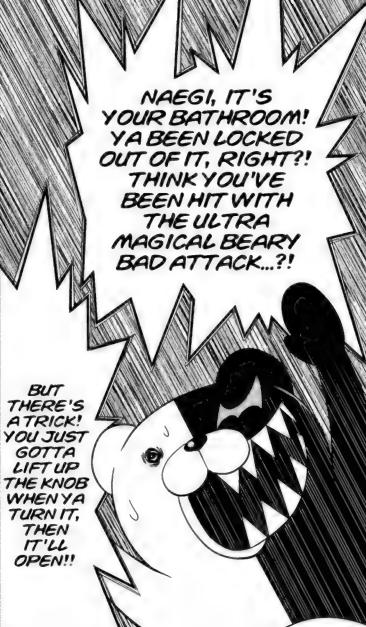
















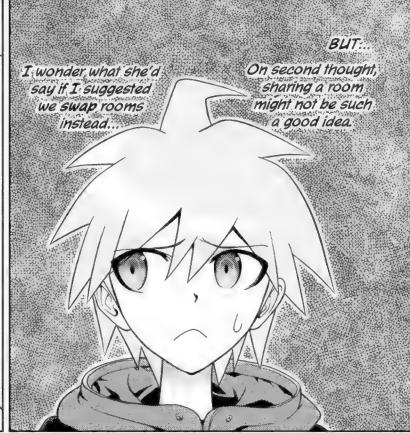


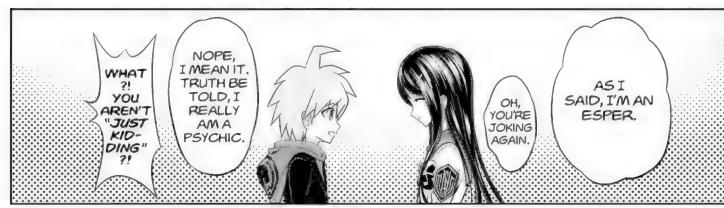




























After all...





















































YOU

CAN'T

BE

SERI

OUS...







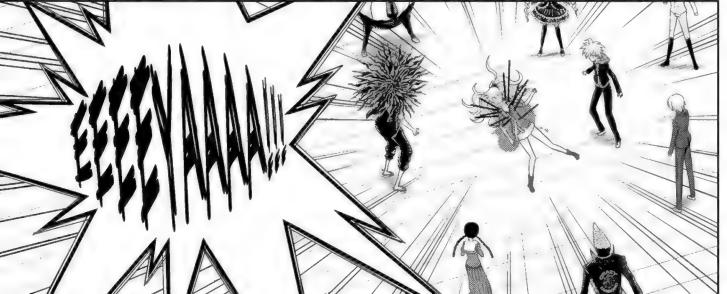


































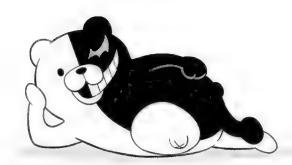








...AND SIESTA-TIME DESPAIR.



AH! THE CAREFREE DAYS OF MUTUAL KILLING...



Y'KNOW, I BET BOTH OF THEM WERE INTO DIETS.



HMM.

COME TO THINK

OF IT...DIDN'T

THE ULTIMATE POP

SENSATION AND

THE ULTIMATE

FASHIONISTA KICK

THE BUCKET?

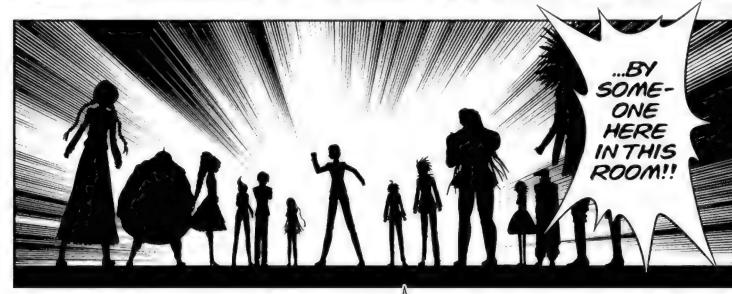


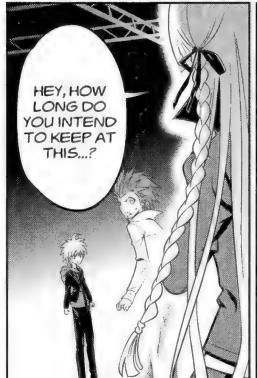










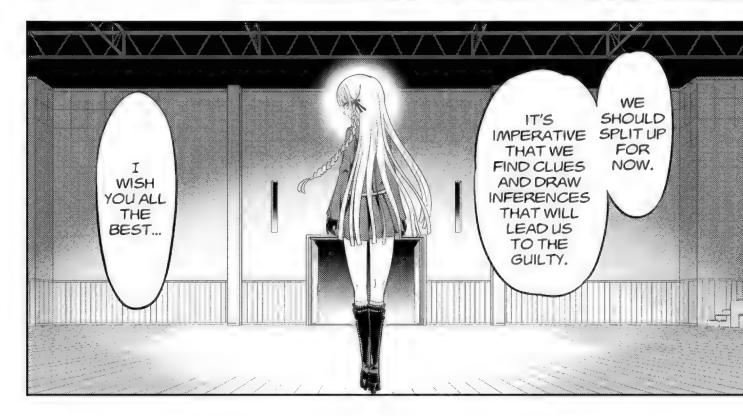












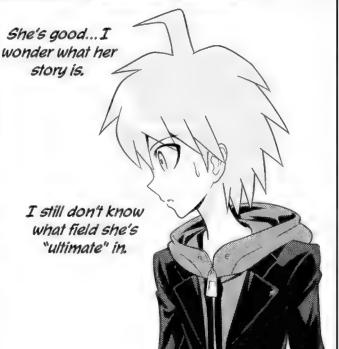




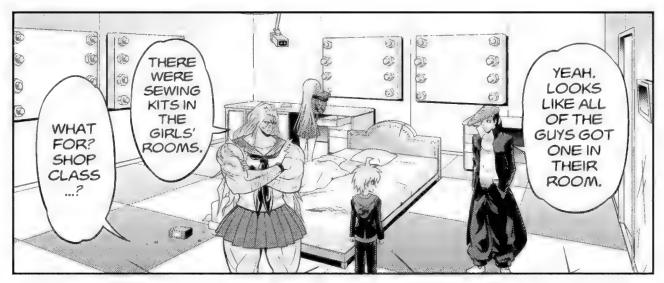


















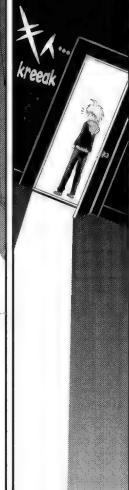




















... I have to









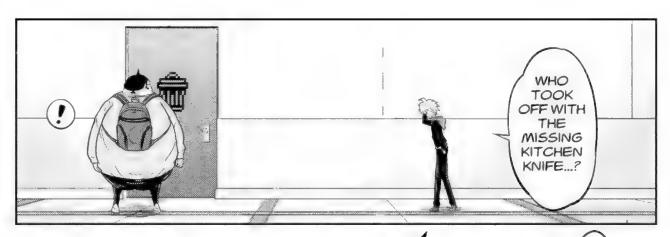








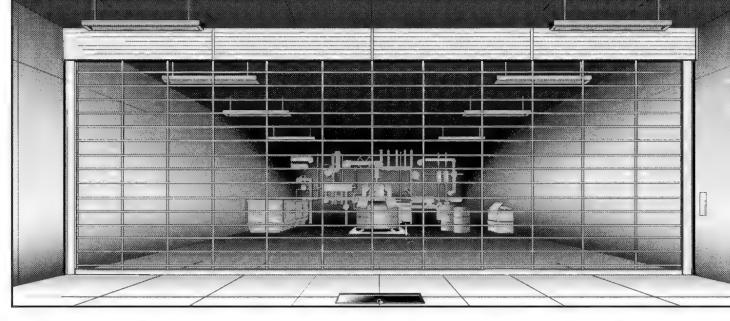
















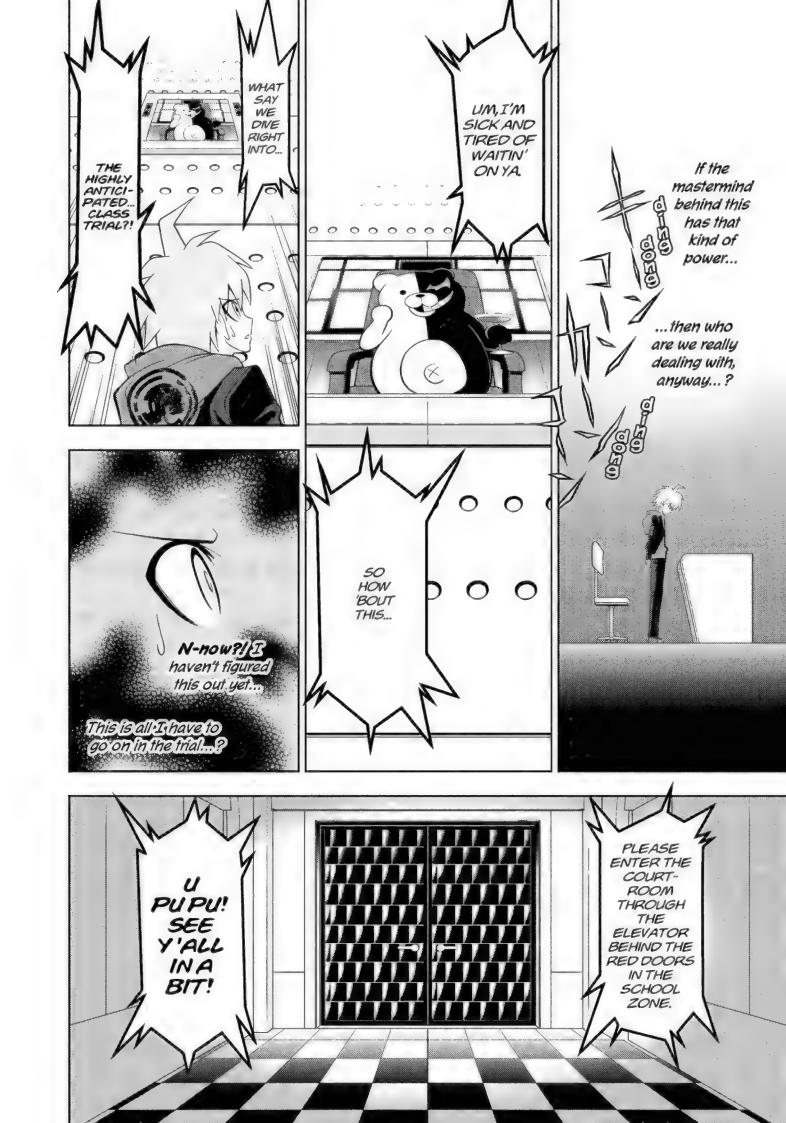














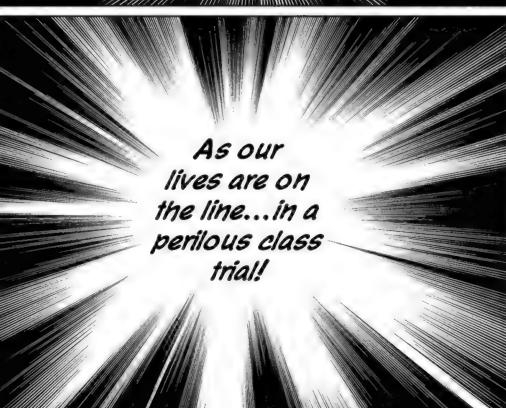
feelasthey awairtheir verdich...?

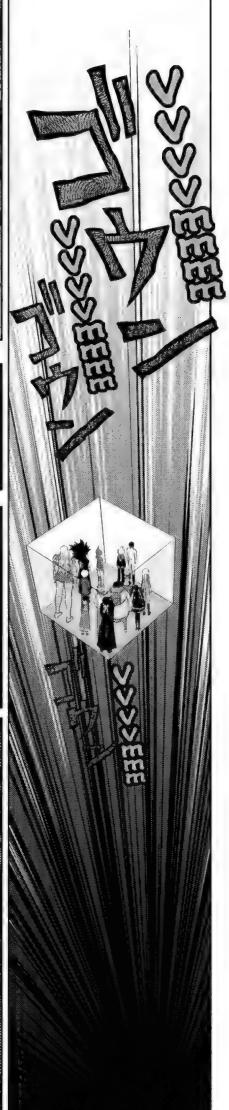
Perilous acisof

beirayal... lineolying

वाह्याहिए । प्रतिविधः









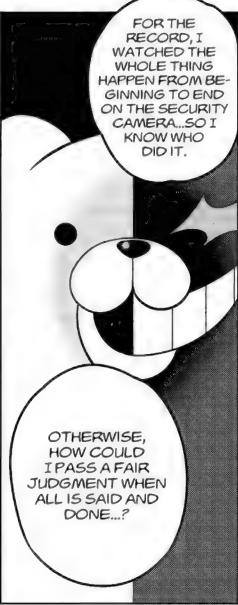






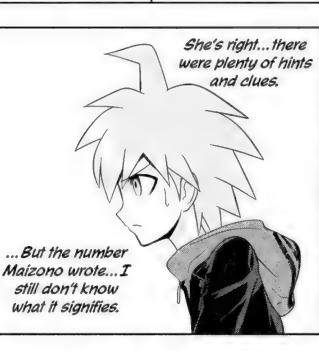
























































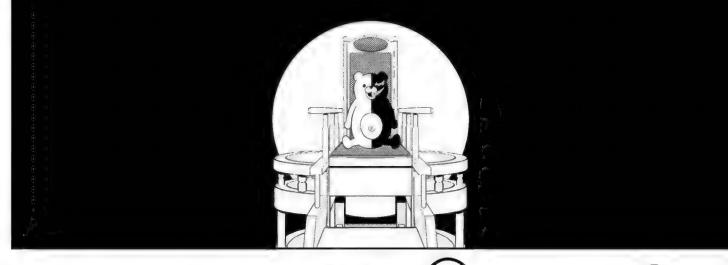




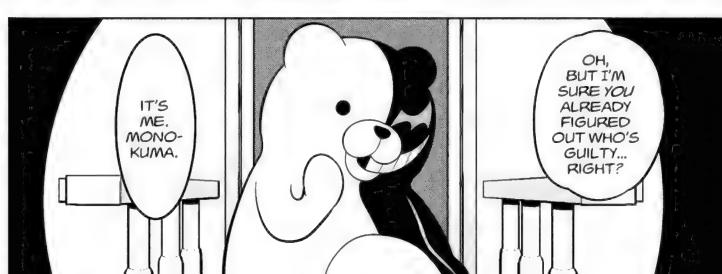
...right, Maizono...?



That's why you traded rooms with me...

































TAKING THIS INTO CONSIDERATION, I CAN SEE WHY SHE WANTED TO TRADE ROOMS WITH YOU, NAEGI.































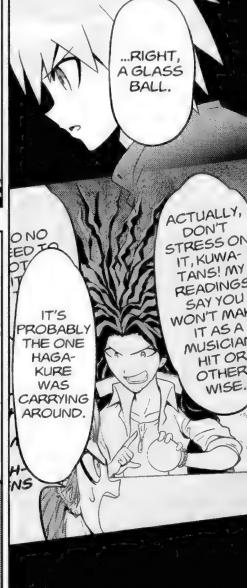










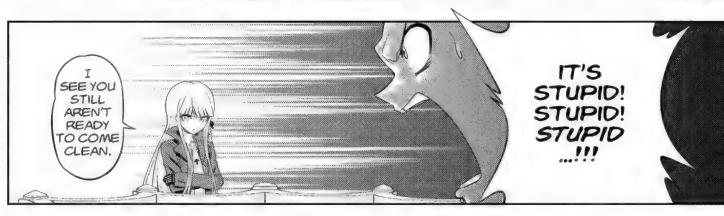








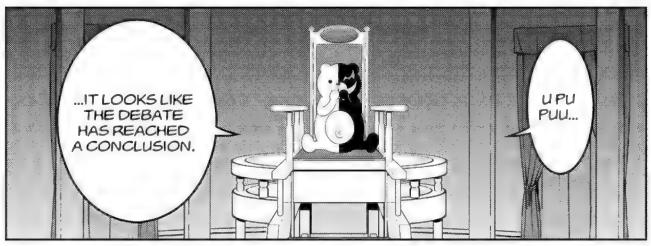






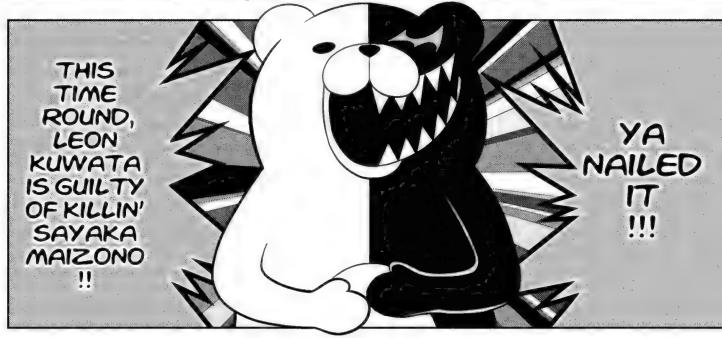


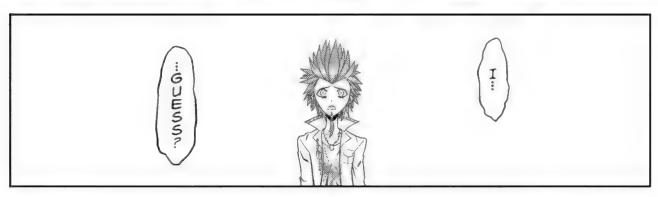










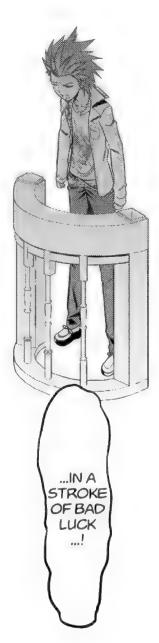








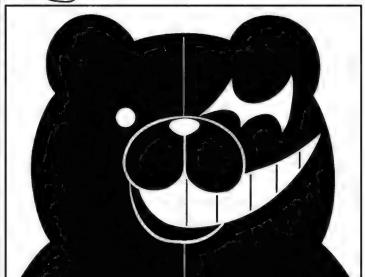
MAIZONO JUST HAPPENED TO PICK ME AS HER TARGET...





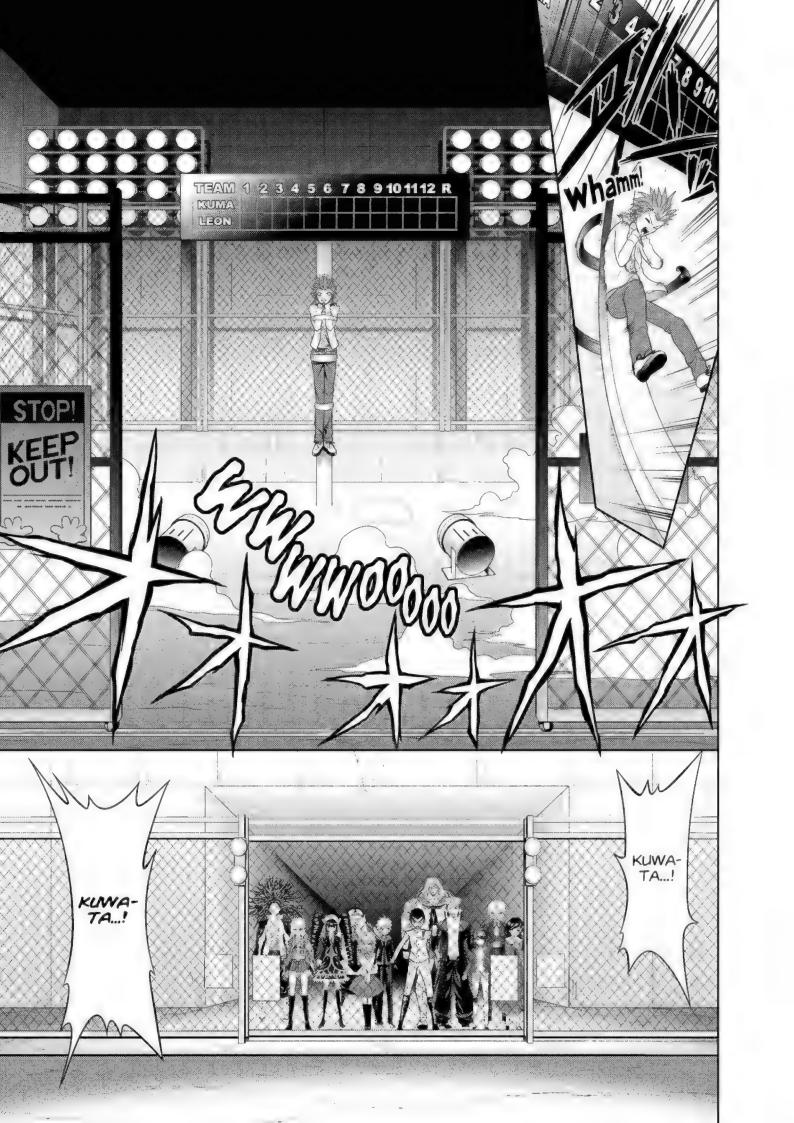












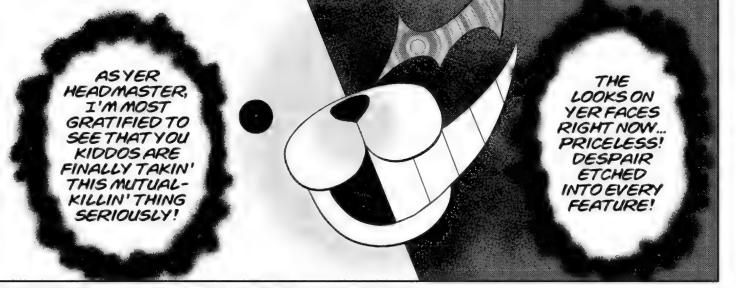
















AND
I DON'T
INTEND TO
PLACE ALL OF
THE BLAME ON
KUWATA,
EITHER.



...I'M NOT GOING TO BLAME MAIZONO FOR WHAT SHE DID.































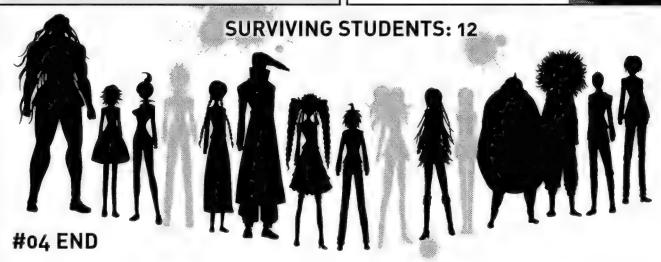


























But it isn't over... ...our despair inside the School of Hope isn't over yet. u Pu Puu! CONTINUED IN VOL. 2

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designer
SARAH TERRY

ultimate digital art technician
CHRISTINA McKENZIE

English-language version produced by Dark Horse Comics

DANGANRONPA: THE ANIMATION VOLUME 1

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Published by Dark Horse Manga A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc. 10956 SE Main Street Milwaukie, OR 97222

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First print edition: March 2016 Digital ISBN 978-1-63008-618-3

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DESPAIR MAIL

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Welcome to Despair Mail, the place for Ultimate Danganronpa Fans! If you'd like to share your thoughts or comments on Danganronpa ... pictures of your Danganronpa cosplay ... or your Danganronpa fan art—this is the place for you! Send it to the address or e-mail at the top of the page, and remember to use high resolution (300 dpi or better) for your photos or images, so it'll look good in print!

We have three fans who were kind enough to write in early to kick off Danganronpa Vol. 1, so let's start! We begin with a letter from Mark Zilberts:

I've been a fan of *Danganronpa* for quite some time now, and when I first got into the series I already had the unfortunate knowledge of the murderer of the first trial, Leon Kuwata. The reason for this comes down to the game's advertising.

The Japanese trailer for the PS Vita release of Danganronpa contained several shots of Leon being dragged away with chains. This doesn't leave much up to the imagination and as a result, we are led to be suspicious toward the character. What makes this worse is the roll call of characters that has everyone looking straight toward the camera—taken from the game as they are reacting to Leon's execution—except for Leon, who is positioned in a different way with his eyes rolling back. Comparing this to the original Japanese PSP trailer, they used shots from a different build of the game and yet still ended it with Leon being dragged away. The English trailer does the same thing with the roll call, but coupled with a zooming target/crosshairs on his face, just to drill the suspicion in further.

I understand that it is hard to market a game that falls into the murder-mystery genre when the trial game play is the main focal point, but it's a shame because Leon is actually a pretty good character. Through the free-time events in the game, we learn that he actually wants to go into music and is tired of baseball, which ties into the irony that one of the reasons he was caught is because it could only have been him—the Ultimate Baseball Star—that could have thrown Yasuhiro's crystal ball through the small gaps in the grate with such accuracy.

The original Japanese trailer for *Danganronpa: The Animation* did not contain any spoilers, as they actually

drew scenes for both the trailer and the opening that featured the entire cast regardless of situation; the roll call for the trailer featured Leon in the same style as everyone else and the opening for every episode featured the trial room spinning, with every character present. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about the English trailer for *Danganronpa: The Animation* . . . I recommend anyone trying to get into the series ignore all forms of advertising from this English dub for the anime; the trailer genuinely spoils everything.

There was a demo for *Danganronpa* that was only available in Japanese that acted as a spoiler-free way to let people try out the game. In this demo it was in fact Yasuhiro that died in the bathroom, in much the same way, except that he did not write anything on the walls like Sayaka did that led to the downfall of Leon. This leads to us actually getting to play some parts of the first trial with Sayaka being involved. It also hinted that the culprit for the first trial is not Leon but instead Hifumi due to various mentions of potato grease on the floor in the bedroom along with Hifumi's constant talk about potato chips. Although this is mostly speculation as far as I can tell, aside from a one-volume manga that apparently confirms it, it is still interesting to see the different ways that the series has been advertised.

Thank you for bringing this manga into English! I hope that it can bring some more fans into the series who might expand into the rest of the *Danganronpa* universe as a result. ^^

It can be tricky sometimes to promote a work without showing some of its dramatic scenes, which then risk giving away too much of the plot. We can see this in a lot of Hollywood movie trailers, too. You're right about the conflict between trying to promote the "murder mystery" vs. the "trial" aspects of Danganronpa. Courtroom cross-examination can be dramatic, but murder is more dramatic still, and I guess you can argue that the murders come first in Danganronpa, because without the crime, you don't have the trial confronting the crime.

When Dark Horse advertised Danganronpa Vol. 1 in Previews magazine, I don't think we did anything to reveal the identity of Maizono's murderer (i.e., Leon), but we did reveal that Maizono would be murdered, by using the image of Naegi screaming at the discovery of her body. So you could say that we spoiled the murder to some extent (I say "to some extent," because you can't explain what Danganronpa is like if you don't reveal the fact that people are going to get murdered), but we did not spoil the trial aspect of the story, which, as you say, is the focal point of the game play. It's the trial, of course, where Naegi reveals his special strength as a character—and as a hero. We could also say, of course, that by revealing that Maizono dies in vol. 1, we were just keeping to the style of the manga itself, which reveals in the preview for next time that Fujisaki dies in vol. 2.

I was trying to explain Danganronpa to some people who weren't familiar with anime, manga, or Japanese games. I told them it reminds me somewhat of those dystopian young adult novels that are so popular these days—you know the kind, where teenagers are forced into a situation where they have to kill each other or fight for their lives. But there's a big difference in style. How should I put it? Danganronpa can be grim and dark, but it's not grimdark. There's a strong sense of the absurd. To kick it old school, it's almost as if you got Monty Python to do some YA dystopia.

Above everything else, Danganronpa is its characters. You can be drawn into this series by a single line from a single character, captured in a single screencap. I would be afraid that if Hollywood ever adapted Danganronpa, they'd never let the characters be as gloriously weird, bizarre, and individual as the ultimate students of Hope's Peak are. "Uncool," "cool," "ugly," "pretty," "nice," "mean," "gender conforming," "gender nonconforming"—every student still has their own personal style that shines through. Identity and labels are one thing—but personal

style is another. You sometimes see people who greet you in their profile with a long list of identity labels they put on themselves . . . yet somehow they still manage to sound like completely boring individuals. I like the Danganronpa approach better. Never mind those labels—have personal style instead. Don't give up all your clues about who you are at the start—if someone wants to get to know you, make them figure you out!

And that brings us to the "ordinary" Makoto Naegi, whose style doesn't get to show itself until he gets into the courtroom and reveals himself to be a natural-born trial attorney. This is actually a more exotic skill in the eyes of Danganronpa's original Japanese than it is to English-speaking fans. As you may know. Japan doesn't have the centuries-long tradition of cross-examinations in front of a jury that you find in common-law systems like those of the US, Canada, and the UK—Japan didn't even begin using jury trials until 2009 (instead, accused people faced a panel of judges), and even now the system still requires three judges to be members of the jury. On the other hand, members of a jury can do things in Japan that they can't do in America, such as ask questions directly of a witness. If you would like to see how a real murder trial might work in Japan (complete with clues and cross-examinations), check out vol. 13 of The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service from Dark Horse.

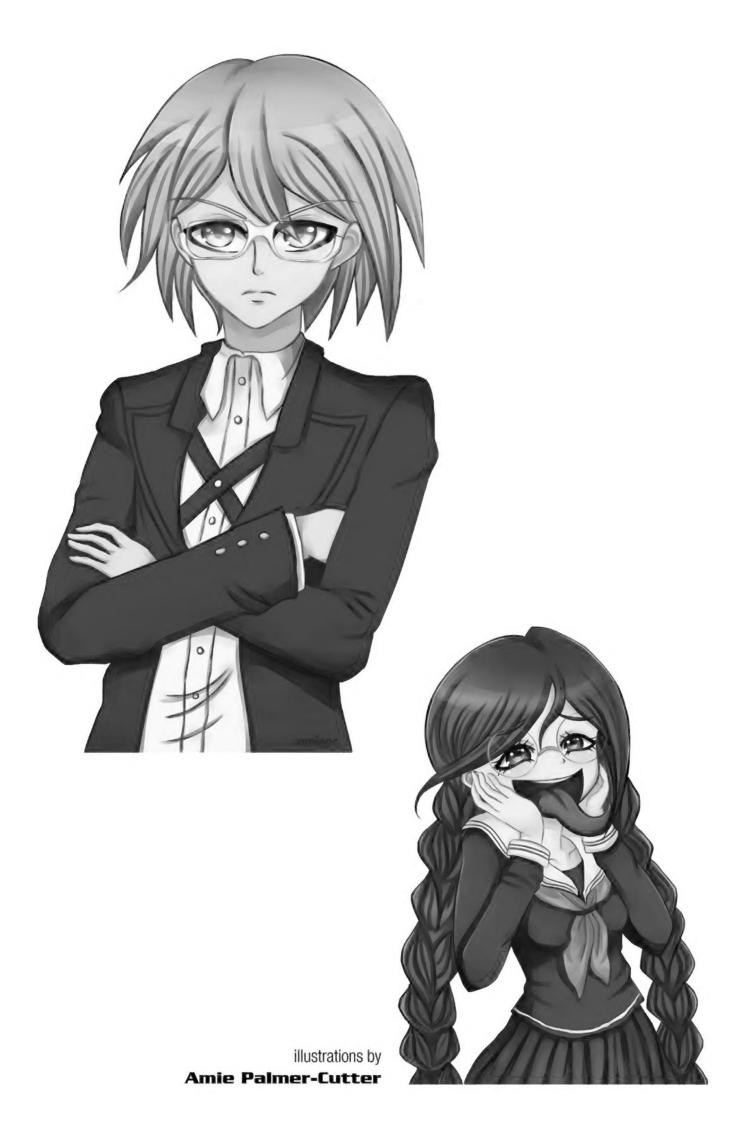
In addition to our first letter, we've also received our first fan art! The illustration of Junko Enoshima is by Shelby Goldsmith. The illustrations of Byakuya Togami and Toko Fukawa (also known as . . .) are by Amie Palmer-Cutter. Thank you both very much! And everyone else, please feel free to send in your own letters, art, cosplay photos, or anything Danganronpa related to Despair Mail! See you in vol. 2 (rhymes with U PU PUU!).

—CGH

P.S. I'm sure many fans are aware of this, but part of the dark humor of Danganronpa is that in the original Japanese version, Monokuma is voiced by Nobuyo Oyama, most famous for the also-cuddly (but much nicer) rotund robot cat, Doraemon. The manga is making reference to Doraemon on page 20, panel 1 and on page 69, panel 2 (and also in panel 3 to Korosuke, another character from the creator of Doraemon).



illustration by **Shelby Goldsmith**





YOUR FIRST DAY OF CLASS WILL BE . . . MURDER!!!

Welcome to Hope's Peak Academy, which selects only the elite . . . plus one ordinary student, chosen by lottery. Makoto Naegi was that lucky person—or so he thought!

When he shows up for class, he finds the students are a bizarre cast of odd-balls under the ruthless authority of a robot teddy bear principal, Monokuma. The bear lays down the school rules: the only way out of Hope's Peak is to not only murder another student . . . but get away with it, in a tribunal where the survivors cross-examine each other!

Inspired by the *Danganronpa* video game series from NIS

America and now on Steam. . . based on the anime series from

Funimation! The first *Danganronpa* manga to be released in English

has twists and turns of its own!



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